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Afghanistan: Development and Humanitarian Priorities

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Summary

This paper outlines urgent action necessary to address immediate challenges in Afghanistan and to avert humanitarian disaster. It does not seek to address all issues of concern but focuses on essential policy change in development and humanitarian spheres.

While aid has contributed to progress in Afghanistan, especially in social and economic infrastructure – and whilst more aid is needed – the development process has to date been too centralised, top-heavy and insufficient. It has been prescriptive and supply-driven, rather than indigenous and responding to Afghan needs. As a result millions of Afghans, particularly in rural areas, still face severe hardship comparable with sub-Saharan Africa. Conditions of persistent poverty have been a significant factor in the spread of insecurity.

Donors must improve the impact, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of aid. There needs to be stronger coordination and more even distribution of aid, greater alignment with national and local priorities and increased use of Afghan resources. Indicators of aid effectiveness should be established, and a commission to monitor donor performance.

Despite progress in some ministries, government capacity is weak and corruption is widespread, which is hindering service delivery and undermining public confidence in state-building as a whole. Further major reforms are required in public administration, anti-corruption and the rule of law.

Urgent action is required to promote comprehensive rural development, where progress has been slow, through building local government to deliver essential services, reforming sub-national governance, and channelling more resources directly to communities.

Whilst Provincial Reconstruction Teams may be necessary in some areas, they have significantly exceeded their interim, security mandate. Through diverting resources, they have impeded the development of effective institutions of local government and PRT projects are no substitute for long-term, community-led development work. Military projects can also compromise the neutrality and scope of humanitarian work. PRTs should therefore adhere to their mandate: to facilitate the development of stable and secure environment, and should only undertake relief or development work where there is a critical need and no civilian alternative. In accordance with their interim status, each PRT should develop a phased, conditions-based exit strategy.

Agriculture, and connected trades, is the mainstay of the nation, supporting 80% of all Afghans, yet it is severely under-funded. A multi-stakeholder strategy should be developed to ensure the provision of agricultural support at local level, covering arable and livestock farming, rural trades, and improved land and water management. It must ensure relevant support for the economic and occupational activities of rural women.

Neither aggressive eradication nor licensing will reduce opium production. The Afghan government and donors should support a long-term, comprehensive approach which seeks to promote sustainable rural development and which prioritises support for licit agriculture – and not only in those areas which grow poppy. There needs to be rigorous and balanced implementation of the existing counter-narcotics strategy, with greater outreach to community elders and action against major traffickers.

Despite dramatic improvements in education, still half of Afghan children – predominantly girls – are out of school and drop out rates for girls are particularly high: large-scale investments are required in teachers, education infrastructure, combined with systemic reform.

Whilst significant progress has been made in the provision of health care, overall public health remains poor. Donors and the government should do more to expand the provision of health care in remote areas; strengthen institutional capacity, coordination and security at sub-national level; expand and improve hospital care; and increase the number of female health workers.

High numbers of civilian casualties are being caused by all parties to the conflict. There must be continued condemnation of the actions of armed opposition groups which cause civilian casualties, including summary executions, suicide bombs, roadside attacks and the use of civilian locations from which to launch attacks, all of which are wholly unacceptable. International forces must ensure that the use of force is proportionate both in air strikes and house searches, and even more determined efforts must be made to ensure the security of Afghan communities in insurgency-affected areas. Actions that undermine the good-will of the people ultimately undermine both stability and opportunities for development.

The separation of NATO and US-led coalition commands creates inconsistencies in operating standards and in civil-military coordination: there should be unified NATO command of all international forces, close coordination with Afghan forces and universally applicable standards of operation, rigorously enforced. A new multi-stakeholder entity should be established through the UN to investigate and monitor alleged abuses. International forces should establish a system to ensure compensation or other reparation for civilian casualties and the destruction of property. The UN's capacity for humanitarian response and coordination, at both central and regional levels, should be strengthened significantly.

According to the UN there are 130,000 long-term displaced people in Afghanistan, and recent fighting has displaced up to 80,000; there has also been a substantial influx of refugees and deportees from Pakistan and Iran, respectively. Donors should ensure sufficient resources are available to respond to these increasing population movements.

Local level disputes have a significant cumulative impact on peace, development and the wider conflict. There should be a national strategy for community peace-building, which strengthens social cohesion and enhances community capacities to resolve conflict; it should be led by community leaders and civil-society, and fully-supported by donors. It should include measures to ensure the participation of women in peace-building activities.

As a land-locked country, with vast, largely porous borders, Afghanistan is unavoidably affected by the policies of its neighbours. They should do more to help the country on refugees, security, narcotics, and trade, which is in their own long-term interests. To address underlying problems, the international community in Afghanistan must achieve a deeper level of engagement on regional issues. Military action by a foreign power against Iran, or against groups in the Afghan border areas of Pakistan, could be seriously destabilising for Afghanistan.

A clear majority of Afghans support the international presence in Afghanistan,¹ but the development process has made only a limited difference to their lives, and with spreading insecurity a change of course is now essential. The policy changes proposed in this paper would represent a step towards achieving that and they should therefore be incorporated into the revised Afghan National Development Strategy.²

Peace in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without improving the lives of ordinary Afghans. This requires strong leadership by the Afghan government and sustained and concerted action by donors and neighbouring states. It requires more determined efforts by all donors, with greater direction from the United Nations, which is severely under-resourced, and the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). A resolute, substantial and long-term commitment by the international community is essential not only to secure development progress but to halt the spread of insecurity.

As by far the largest donor and troop-contributor, the role of the United States in Afghanistan will be critical. However, *all* donors and troop-contributing states have a crucial role in pressing for urgent action to meet the challenges facing Afghanistan: millions of lives depend upon it.

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1 Aid effectiveness

Since 2001, Afghanistan has received more than \$15 billion in assistance, and the US House of Representatives has approved \$6.4 billion more in economic and development assistance.⁴ Aid will be crucial to Afghanistan's development for many years and, as this paper argues, many areas are under-resourced.

However, too much aid to Afghanistan is provided in ways that are ineffective or inefficient. For example, Afghanistan's biggest donor, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) allocates close to half of its funds to five large US contractors in the country.⁵ As in Iraq, too much aid is absorbed by profits of companies and sub-contractors, on non-Afghan resources and on high expatriate salaries and living costs. Each full-time expatriate consultant costs in the region of \$200,000 a year, and in some cases up to half a million dollars a year.⁶ According to the former NATO Special Civilian Representative the cumulative impact is that some 40% of aid to Afghanistan flows out of the country.⁷

The Afghan government has significant budget execution problems, due to insufficient or ineffective donor efforts to build the institutional and implementing capacities of line ministries. Some two-thirds of US foreign assistance bypasses the Afghan government that officials say they want to strengthen.

A number of donors, including the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), provide significant funds through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), which provides a predictable and accountable source of funds for recurrent government expenditure. However, it is regrettable that DFID has very substantially reduced its funding for Afghan and international NGOs, who play an important role in grassroots capacity building, rural development and support for delivery of essential services.

There is insufficient direction and support provided by the UN and JCMB, both of which are substantially under-resourced, and too little coordination between donors and the government of Afghanistan. Of all technical assistance to Afghanistan, which accounts for a quarter of all aid to the country, only one-tenth is coordinated among donors or with the government.⁸ Nor is there sufficient collaboration on project work, which inevitably leads to duplication or incoherence of activities by different donors.

Funding for development is a fraction of that spent on military operations: the US military is spending \$65,000 a minute in Afghanistan (\$35 billion for 2007).⁹ Aid funds are following the fighting: USAID concentrates more than half of its budget on the four most insecure provinces; DFID allocates one-fifth of its budget to Helmand; Canada allocates one-third of its aid budget to Kandahar.¹⁰ Promoting development in the south is essential but, as we have seen over the last two years, if other provinces are neglected then insecurity could spread.

Recommendations

Reconfigure and coordinate aid

Donors should ensure aid programmes are consistent with Afghanistan's national and local development priorities. The JCMB and UN should be significantly strengthened to coordinate donor activities and ensure a more even distribution of resources.¹¹ They should also seek to ensure that the distribution of aid does not disproportionately benefit one or other of Afghanistan's ethnic groups.

Increase transparency

Donors should publicly provide comprehensive information on aid flows, including on tender procedures, use of Afghan resources, and contractor salaries and profit margins.

Establish indicators of aid effectiveness

Indicators of aid effectiveness, with correlative targets, should be established for each objective under Annex II of the Afghanistan Compact and those contained in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.¹²

Establish a Commission for Aid Effectiveness

An independent Commission on Aid Effectiveness should be established, possibly through the UN, and supported by independent management consultants, to monitor compliance with the proposed aid indicators, and deficiencies in the delivery of aid. Each donor should report regularly to the proposed Commission on the extent to which it meets or falls short of aid effectiveness targets, in particular: impact, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of aid, and use of Afghan resources.

Increase the volume of aid

There is a powerful case for more aid to be directed to areas highlighted in this paper, such as education and agriculture, in conjunction with steps to enhance its effectiveness and build ministerial implementing capacity. The internationally-administered Trust Funds offer an effective means of minimising waste.¹³ At the same time, sufficient funds should also be allocated to effective Afghan and international NGOs. However, any overall increase in the volume of aid to Afghanistan should not be at the expense of aid to other developing countries.

2 National Governance

Weaknesses in governance are increasingly cited by Afghans as a reason for dissatisfaction with the government. They hinder service delivery and undermine the legitimacy and credibility of state-building as a whole, thereby contributing to greater insecurity.

Government systems and processes are opaque, bureaucratic and convoluted, giving rise to opportunities for graft. Corruption is widespread, endemic and, as the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board puts it, 'continues to flourish'.¹⁴ Despite some improvements, the institutional and technical capacity of line ministries is weak and there are profound deficiencies in human resources. Female participation in government institutions and in decision-making remains limited.

There is uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities of state entities, with poor coordination between them. They are subjected to only limited, *ad hoc* scrutiny, and parliament is yet to establish an effective system for scrutinising government policies.

These problems are compounded by the opium economy, where there are links to central government, and weaknesses in the justice sector, where, 'rule of law remains precarious, governance is fragile, and the judicial system is ineffectual and inaccessible'.¹⁵ Despite improvements, the Afghan National Police (ANP) lacks both professionalism and independence.

The problems cannot all be attributed to the government: donor programmes have in many cases failed to build institutional capacities or establish proper systems of governance. Incoherent, wasteful and short-term programmes, with weak financial oversight, have to some degree accentuated problems of corruption, inefficiency and lack of coordination.

Recommendations

Strengthen public administration reform

Several mechanisms, such as the Advisory Panel on Senior Appointments and the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission, have been established to ensure fair, transparent, and merit-based appointments, but have not yet delivered results. These bodies must themselves be transparent and subject to independent scrutiny; they should comprise only those members who are demonstrably independent. It is the duty of the international community – whose funds are at stake – to press for such changes.

Pay and grading reform, due to be implemented over a four-year period, should be expedited. Stronger leadership and greater efforts are required by ministers and donors to increase women's participation in government and to build the capacity of line ministries to implement the National Action Plan for Women. Continued efforts must be made to strengthen the capacity of civil administration, clarify responsibilities, and improve coordination between ministries. Reform of *sub-national* governance is a priority, which is outlined in following section.

Enhance anti-corruption measures

Rigorous implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy is essential. The Anti-Corruption Commission should be overhauled to ensure its transparency and integrity. With international support there should be concerted measures to enhance transparency of government operations, especially in tax, procurement and expenditure; build stronger mechanisms for monitoring, oversight and audit; eliminate bureaucracy, and streamline processes and procedures. Measures to address corruption in politics, counter-narcotics institutions and the private sector are equally important. Major reform of the ANP is required to enhance professionalism, accountability and diversity, and to ensure autonomy from political interference.¹⁶

Reform the legal and institutional framework

As part of broader reform of the justice sector, the legal and institutional anti-corruption framework must be strengthened. This will require measures to enhance the capabilities, independence and integrity of the judiciary and anti-corruption institutions, and to implement and enforce the UN Convention Against Corruption.

3 Rural Development and Sub-National Governance

While aid has undoubtedly contributed to progress in Afghanistan, especially in social and economic infrastructure, the development process has not sufficiently benefited the majority of the population who live in rural areas, where essential services, such as water or electricity, remain scarce or insufficient.

Line ministries are over-centralised and dominate resource allocation, management and planning from Kabul. Provincial line departments have limited autonomy and are subject to interventions by Governors' Offices which creates operational problems and deters the de-concentration of resources. In villages and districts government is either non-existent or weak and ineffective having limited capabilities and profoundly inadequate human and financial resources.¹⁷ There has been very little donor or government activity to build institutional capacity at district and provincial level, and no such efforts with national coverage.

At sub-national level there are a number of administrative, appointed and elected entities, which have unclear or overlapping responsibilities, with insufficient or uncertain resources (for example, at provincial level: the Governor's Office, Line Departments, Provincial Council, Administrative Assembly and Development Committee).

There is excessive bureaucracy, lack of transparency and significant disparities in the distribution of government resources throughout the country. (For example some provinces have more than twenty times the per capita funding for health than for others.)¹⁸ In a number of provincial centres corruption is endemic and tribal and ethnic factors, rather than competency, determine key appointments.¹⁹ Municipalities have unclear responsibilities and revenue-raising powers, weak financial management and limited accountability.

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) has succeeded in channelling resources directly to elected Community Development Councils (CDCs) representing over 25,000 villages, over 70% of Afghanistan's communities. Through the Programme NGO assistance is provided for community-directed development projects, for example water supply or school construction, and there have been several positive assessments of the Programme in terms of project implementation, governance and stabilisation. Yet funding for the NSP programme has been irregular and its future is uncertain; the expanded role and legal status of CDCs set out in a new by-law and their relationship to other elements of local government is also uncertain.²⁰

Recommendations

Build local government to deliver essential services

Intensive efforts are required to build the capacity of the Afghan government to deliver or oversee the delivery of essential services at local level, especially education, water, sanitation and health (where most provision is indirect). Reform must seek to de-concentrate the centralised powers and resources of ministries, and build institutional systems and capacities at local level. Donors and key ministries, including the new Independent Directorate for Local Governance, should establish a group to intensify and coordinate efforts on this issue.

Reform sub-national governance

Legislative reform is required to clarify the roles, responsibilities and relationships of sub-national state entities at provincial, municipal, district and village level, including CDCs, and to rationalise and clarify coordination and planning. Reform should ensure that the primary role of the Governor's Offices is provincial coordination and planning, rather than involvement in the operation of line departments. Greater technical and financial support should be provided to elected bodies, principally Provincial Councils, to support monitoring, oversight and representation, particularly on development issues.²¹ Measures are also required to enhance local government transparency, simplify procedures and strengthen ongoing public administration reforms. In conjunction with wider legislative, coordination and planning reform, such measures could substantially improve accountability and reduce corruption.

Increase support to communities

More resources should be channelled directly to communities by (1) ensuring a timely and sufficient flow of funds to CDCs, and providing guaranteed funding to secure the future of the Programme; (2) through CDCs, channelling funds for sector-specific and multi-community projects; and (3) where CDCs do not exist, using other means of providing support to communities, such as through local NGOs.

4 Provincial Reconstruction Teams

There are 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan led by 13 different nations. Their mission statement is to 'assist the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform and reconstruction efforts'.²² The PRT Handbook also states that each PRT is an 'interim structure', which, on fulfilment of its mission, should be dismantled.

PRTs have gone well beyond this interim, security mandate, often engaging in extensive development work, implemented either by the military or government agencies. Afghan communities appreciate any support they can get, but whilst PRT resources and activities have expanded, local government institutions, with significantly smaller budgets, have been under-used and under-developed. It will not be possible to strengthen institutions of local government and to improve their accountability, if they are deprived of resources.²³ In some cases PRTs have used their

influence to intervene in provincial political or administrative affairs which has generated considerable local resentment.

There are major variations in funding and activities between PRTs and a significant number of projects are not in alignment with provincial or national plans, or the interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Being nation-led, they are often driven more by available funding or the political interests of the nation involved rather than development considerations. Frequent use of local contractors, especially in the south, has meant many projects are badly implemented; systemic or political pressure and frequent rotations has tended to result in a large number of small-scale, short-term projects. The absence of community participation, or association with the military, has led to projects which are unsuitable, unused or targeted by militants.

Given the historic suspicion of foreign intervention, such efforts to win 'hearts and minds' are naïve. It is unsurprising that the huge expansion of PRT activities has not prevented the deterioration of security. The development process needs to be owned and led by Afghan communities, which is essential for sustainability. PRTs are no substitute for long-term development work.

PRTs also blur the distinction between the military and aid workers, jeopardising the perceived neutrality of the latter, putting them in danger and reducing operating space for humanitarian organisations.

Recommendations

Re-focus PRTs

PRTs should adhere to their mandate: to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment; and they should only exist where security conditions make them absolutely necessary.²⁴ In respect of humanitarian activities, as the international community first agreed in the 'Oslo Guidelines' of 1994, the military should only undertake relief work in exceptional circumstances: where there is a critical humanitarian need and no civilian alternative, and their activities should focus on 'indirect assistance and infrastructure support'.²⁵ As indicated above, the quality and impact of this work could in many cases be substantially improved.

Exit strategies

In accordance with their interim status, exit strategies should be developed for each PRT, with down-scaling and closure plans for those in comparatively secure areas. At a macro level donor funds should be re-routed from PRTs to national government, through the internationally-administered Afghanistan Trust Funds, and, as a priority, to local government and Afghan communities.

5 Agriculture

Agriculture, and connected occupations and trades, supports the subsistence or employment of at least 80% of Afghans and has traditionally accounted for at least half the economy. However, war, displacement, persistent droughts, flooding, the laying of mines, and the sustained absence of natural resource management has led to massive

environment degradation and the depletion of resources. In recent years Afghanistan's overall agricultural produce has fallen by half.²⁶ Over the last decade in some regions Afghanistan's livestock population has fallen by up to 60%²⁷ and over the last two decades, the country has lost 70% of its forests.²⁸ There continue to be major food shortages, and in 2007 the World Food Programme sought to provide food to 5.4 million Afghans.²⁹

Yet, given the scale of reliance on agriculture, international support in the sector has been modest and government assistance extremely limited. Donors have spent less \$300-400m directly on agricultural projects over the last six years – a fraction of overall assistance to Afghanistan.³⁰ Aside from narcotics-related programmes, in 2006 USAID allocated less than 4% of total funding for Afghanistan to agriculture, and planned spending for fiscal years 2007 and 2008 is just 4% and 3% respectively.³¹

In Daikundi province, for example, there are close to half a million people who depend on the land, yet there is virtually no international support for agriculture. The provincial Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock which is responsible for providing all official support for farming in the province, has a threadbare staff of 16, only two of whom have relevant qualifications, with no funds for projects.

Rural unemployment is extremely high at over 50%, and is exacerbated by large scale deportations of economic migrants from Iran and the return of refugees. A convoluted system of land rights remains an impediment to greater investment in and use of agricultural land.

Recommendations

Develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure agricultural support at local level

Urgent efforts must be made to provide local-level support for agriculture and off-farm trades, which would improve livelihoods, strengthen food security and reduce unemployment. The Afghan government, with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, donors and NGOs, should develop a strategy to enhance the institutional capacity of the Department of Agriculture at district level, and expand the scale and range of agricultural support, including assistance provided on a cost-recovery basis.

The strategy should cover the recruitment and training of staff, technical support in designing and implementing projects, streamlining bureaucracy, coordination with other relevant line departments and the provision of substantial additional resources. Contracting-out to NGOs, as used for health care delivery, could help to overcome short-term capacity constraints.

In programme terms, the strategy should address: the distribution of improved seed varieties, fertilizers and pesticides; crop diversification, horticulture, and kitchen gardens; training in agricultural skills, techniques and improved animal husbandry methods; livestock development, especially improved use of fodder crops, fodder storage, management of grazing land, and herd or flock management; the provision of veterinary services, especially for vaccinations and disease control in remote areas; and the provision of agricultural tools and sustainable mechanisation. Wider establishment

of community cooperatives could help farmers gain access to finance, and share best practices and resources. The strategy must ensure that rural women benefit from increased support, whether in farming or off-farm rural trades, and that their particular skills and resource needs are addressed.

Improve land and water management capabilities

The proposed strategy should incorporate capacity building and financial support for effective land management; water resources management, especially irrigation systems and water-shed programmes; and community-based disaster risk reduction. On-going land rights reform, to clarify and harmonize multiple systems of land tenure, should be expedited. Support is also required for processing and marketing methods, transport infrastructure and access to markets.

Support rural trades

Greater resources should be devoted to support for off-farm and non-farm income generation activities, such as carpet-making or handicrafts – ranging from skills training to access to markets.

6 Counter-Narcotics

In 2007 the cultivation of poppy and production of opium was up on 2006 by 17% and 34% respectively. Production has doubled in two years and now accounts for 93% of global illicit supply.³² Although cultivation has been reduced in the centre-north of Afghanistan, cultivation in the insecure south has vastly increased. State officials are known to be complicit in poppy cultivation, trafficking or non-intervention. The opium industry is valued at three billion dollars a year,³³ accounting for up to a third of the economy.

The opium economy is deep-rooted and complex, inextricably connected both to insecurity and to poverty, and compounded by inequitable systems of land tenure, share-cropping and credit. According to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, over 90% of farmers grow opium for economic reasons, and only a fraction would continue to do so if there were viable alternatives.³⁴

Recommendations

Adopt a comprehensive, long-term approach

There are no simple solutions or quick fixes to the narcotics problem. In particular, only limited progress, if any, can be expected in Helmand province, which produces more than half of Afghan opium. The reality of a global heroin market should be taken into account: as long as demand persists, opium will be produced somewhere to meet illicit demand.

The Afghan government and donors should support a long term, multi-sectoral approach which above all seeks to achieve sustainable rural development. As success in tackling opium production in Thailand demonstrates, counter-narcotics requires broad-based economic development and state-building, particularly at local level.³⁵

There needs to be substantial additional support for licit agriculture, as well as off-farm and other rural trades, as outlined in the previous section, so that farmers are not forced to turn to poppy. Agricultural programmes must be comprehensive and not just focused on those areas that grow poppy: alternative livelihood programmes, where they are area- or target-limited, can create perverse incentives. To support a long-term approach, counter-narcotics should be removed from short-term political milestones for Afghanistan which have been established by the international community. In addition, there needs to be mainstreaming of the drugs issue into overall reconstruction and peace-building efforts, a better understanding of global market dynamics and greater Afghan ownership over the drugs policy debate.

Strengthen implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy

There needs to be a more rigorous and balanced implementation of the National Drugs Control Strategy, which rightly includes elements of interdiction, manual eradication, incentives, public information, demand reduction and law enforcement. In particular, donors and the government should:

- Expand outreach to mullahs and community elders who are the central authority, both in morality and governance, for rural Afghans (more than one in three farmers who have decided not to grow poppy attribute their decision to religion or the disapproval of elders).³⁶
- Ensure law enforcement starts at the top: prosecutions or action to undermine the activities of major drug barons or state officials who are complicit in trafficking, would have a powerful disruptive and deterrent effect – so far fewer than a dozen mid-level traffickers have been prosecuted.
- Institute treatment and harm reduction programmes for drug users in Afghanistan,³⁷ neighbouring countries and international consumption markets, to reduce demand for Afghan opiates and to reduce the risk of blood-borne diseases such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.

Reject proposals for aggressive eradication

Evidence indicates that small farmers cannot easily shift to alternative crops, thus eradication should only be used where it is targeted, and where there are substantial and viable livelihood alternatives. Without such alternatives, eradication can severely exacerbate rural poverty, simply displace cultivation, and even create incentives for farmers to increase opium cultivation in response to actual or threatened eradication. The government should reject aggressive eradication, such as aerial spraying, which would hit poor Afghan farmers, not the traffickers. It would drive them to seek protection from anti-government groups, lead to greater backing for the Taliban and create wider insecurity.

Reject proposals for licensing cultivation for medical opiates

To fulfil domestic requirements, the Afghan government could legitimately use confiscated opiates for medicinal production. However, the Afghan government and donors should reject proposals for licensing, which would be ineffective and unworkable in Afghanistan, for the following reasons:

- This would not affect the production of illicit opium because (1) half the country is highly insecure and in many areas either the Taliban dominate or the government's authority is too weak to operate such a programme, and (2) the

licit price could never match the illicit price, which could be as much as ten times greater, thus the black market would remain.³⁸

- The additional demand and greater perceived legitimacy would result in increased cultivation: currently only 4% of Afghanistan's agricultural land is used for poppy.³⁹
- There are insufficient resources or controls to prevent illicit diversion of the licit crop – which is up to 30% of total production in India.⁴⁰ Thus, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) could not sanction such use, as it requires guaranteed security of the licit crop.
- It would confuse messages on drug control from the government, donors and not least, from the mullahs who have decreed that it is against Islam.⁴¹
- It is unnecessary: according to the INDB there is a world over-supply of opiates: national shortages or under-usage, especially in developing countries, is caused by restrictive legal regulations and bureaucracy, low health care budget resources and low policy priority for palliative care.
- Production, transport, bureaucratic and control costs would render Afghan morphine uncompetitive as against other licit producers in the global market, such as Australia.

7 Education

Despite very significant increase in enrolment, approximately half of Afghan children – predominantly girls – are out of school. In 2006 overall enrolment in primary education was 50% for boys and just 20% for girls; for secondary education, it was 20% and 5% respectively.

Teachers are paid an average of just \$50 per month; only 20% are professionally qualified and less than a third is female. There is an immediate shortage of some 50,000 teachers. A high proportion of girls drop out of school to a lack of female teachers, especially in rural areas.⁴²

A significant number of government schools charge end-user fees despite a provision in the Afghan Constitution which guarantees free education. Over 5,000 schools have no buildings. There are major variations between the quality, cost and investment in education between provinces, and national budgeting and expenditure systems are complex and bureaucratic.

As an example, in Daikundi province, of roughly 1,000 official and unofficial teachers, only two have relevant professional qualifications; of 220 schools, only 28 have buildings; and 85% of schools charge user-fees.⁴³

Increasing insecurity in the south has had a major deleterious impact on education: more than half of the 720 schools in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul are closed due to violence or threats,⁴⁴ and overall attendance levels for girls remain extremely low.

Recommendations

International donors should give substantial additional funding to support the implementation of the national education strategy. As set out in Oxfam's recent report on education in Afghanistan⁴⁵ amongst other things, the priorities should be to:

Recruit, train and support more teachers

- Recruit and train of over 50,000 additional primary school teachers, *at least* 50% female.
- Increase the teaching wage and the resettlement allowance for those moving to rural areas.
- Establish well-resourced teacher-training colleges in all provinces and institute comprehensive, in-service training to raise the *quality* of teaching.
- Institute training and other measures to eliminate corporal punishment in schools and to address violence between students.

Build education infrastructure

- Construct at least 7,000 school buildings over the next five years; expand support for outreach classes or community schools in remote areas.
- Eliminate formal and informal end-user fees.
- Provide a universal midday meal in all schools, which would cost \$200m per annum, and has been proven to increase enrolment rates, improve student performance and address child malnutrition.⁴⁶
- Produce and distribute nation-wide high quality text-books to all schools.
- Give more support to communities to improve the security of schools, and to achieve greater security of access for girls.

Improve financial systems, planning and coordination

- Move towards a zero-based budgeting system, coordinate planning at district and national level, and establish a system of resource monitoring.
- Enhance coordination between donors, NGOs, and PRTs to ensure alignment with national and provincial plans, especially in respect of school construction, and to ensure a more even distribution of education funds throughout the country.

8 Health

Significant progress has been made in the provision of health care through the Basic Package of Health Care Services (BPHS), which is implemented on a contractual basis by NGOs and other providers, and overseen by the Ministry of Public Health. Donor-government coordination in health care is effective and there has been progress in capacity building of health care institutions and personnel, primarily at a central level.

Progress has been made from a very low base. Over the last five years there has been a 25% fall in infant mortality, but still, on average, one in five children die before the age of five.⁴⁷ The proportion of young children receiving vital immunizations has

substantially increased, but still around a third of children do not receive vaccinations against tuberculosis⁴⁸, which causes a total of around 12,000 deaths each year.⁴⁹

Over the last three years the number of rural women receiving antenatal care has increased dramatically; likewise, those receiving skilled assistance with child-birth has increased three-fold, yet assistance is currently available to fewer than one in five.⁵⁰ The maternal mortality ratio, at 1600 deaths per 100,000 live births,⁵¹ remains one of the highest in the world; overall life expectancy is just 43-46 years.⁵²

Health care standards and resources vary throughout the country, and insecurity, particularly in the south and south-east, is increasingly constraining the provision of health care in those areas; for example, 21 health clinics have been forced to close in Helmand province.⁵³

Recommendations

Expand the provision of health care in remote areas

Although BPHS coverage is impressive, access is limited for those who live in isolated rural areas as a result of physical, climactic, cost, insecurity and cultural constraints. Thus, more primary health care centres should be established in rural areas, with further measures to promote public health awareness, provide training to district and community health staff, and expand the system of Community Health Workers. Better planning by donors and the MoPH could address provincial disparities in the allocation of resources; donors should also ensure sufficient funding and coordination for the Expanded Programme on Immunization to maximise national coverage.

Strengthen institutional capacity, coordination and security at sub-national level

Donors should provide more support for institutional capacity-building of the MoPH at provincial and local level, particularly in human resources. The MoPH should establish an effective, integrated procurement system and improve provincial-level collaboration and coordination with NGOs and other agencies. Provincial strategies to ensure the security of clinics and safety of health workers should be developed, which includes enhancing engagement with local communities.

Expand and improve secondary and tertiary health care

Whilst the BPHS seeks to address primary health care needs, donors and the Afghan government should invest more in hospitals and health centres. The Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS) should be implemented in more hospitals to ensure better management and a higher quality of supplies, facilities and care in all core clinical functions: medicine, surgery, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology. Hospital standards should be developed with effective monitoring and a comprehensive system of training for hospital staff.⁵⁴

Increase the number of female health workers

A key means of improving women's health, which has been proven to benefit the health of families as a whole, is by expanding access to female health staff. Better opportunities for training and employment packages, which include higher salaries, accommodation incentives and security provisions should be provided in order to attract and retain female health workers.

Increase core government spending on health

Core government spending on health is less than 1% of GDP – equating to around 10% of the overall health budget, with the remainder provided by external sources.⁵⁵ To secure a sustainable, comprehensive health service, the proportion of core government funding for health must be increased.

9 Protection

The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated significantly: the UN estimates that the frequency of attacks, bombings and other violent incidents is up 20-30% on 2006.⁵⁶ In 2007 the conflict claimed over 6,000 lives,⁵⁷ compared to roughly 4,000 for 2006.⁵⁸ At least 1400 civilians have been killed in 2007, 500-600 of whom were killed in operations conducted by international and Afghan forces.⁵⁹ There are more than twice as many air-strikes by international forces in Afghanistan as in Iraq, to which a high number of casualties can be attributed.⁶⁰ Searches conducted by Afghan and international forces have on a number of occasions involved excessive use of force, destruction of property and/or mistreatment of suspects. Discrete ISAF and US-led commands creates operational incoherence, variable operating standards, inconsistent practices in civil-military coordination, and hinders cooperation with Afghan national security forces.

Insurgent and criminal attacks have intensified, killing over 900 Afghan police⁶¹ and 220 international soldiers last year; more than 140 suicide attacks have killed well over 200 civilians.⁶² In the south, south-east and east of the country insurgents are mounting an increasingly vigorous terror campaign of threats, abductions and executions aimed against members of the population suspected of being connected to the Afghan government and its military and civilian international supporters.

According to the UN there are 130,000 long-term displaced people in Afghanistan, and recent fighting in the south has displaced up to 80,000.⁶³ Insecurity has had a wider impact on livelihoods, forcing the closure of education and health facilities. Last year there were at least 131 violent incidents directly targeting or impacting on NGOs, caused by both criminal and insurgent activities; 15 NGO staff were killed, and 88 abducted.⁶⁴ In 2007 there were more than 30 attacks on WFP food convoys.⁶⁵ Humanitarian access has been significantly curtailed and close to half the country, the south and south-east, is now categorised as an extreme or high risk environment for NGOs.⁶⁶ Insecurity has spread to areas which were previously stable, such as parts of north and north-west Afghanistan.

Achieving greater security is a priority for Afghans. The inability of the government and international community to provide greater protection for communities – undoubtedly a challenging task – is a major reason for Afghans turning to the aegis of the Taliban or other anti-government groups.

Recommendations

Ensure proportionate use of force

Afghan and international forces should take all possible steps to minimise civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian property, including rigorous verification of intelligence, and should ensure that searches are conducted with proportionate force and respect for human rights and traditional values. Crucially, the approach must incorporate an empathetic appreciation of the perspective of Afghan people.

Unify command of international forces, ensure common operating standards and enhance coordination with Afghan forces

There should be unified NATO command for all international forces in Afghanistan, with a permanent mechanism to monitor operating standards of all units, ensure all detainees are treated in accordance with international humanitarian law, including those transferred to the custody of Afghan authorities, and strengthen coordination with Afghan forces. Wherever possible community elders should be engaged or forewarned in respect of military operations.

Establish new mechanisms to monitor, investigate and compensate for civilian casualties

A new cross-sector body should be established, comprising the Afghan government, ISAF, UN and Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, to monitor and investigate civilian casualties, destruction of property and alleged abuses. A comprehensive system should be instituted to ensure timely and sufficient compensation is paid to civilians who have suffered from military operations.

Support increasing numbers of refugees and IDPs

A national action plan should be developed to respond to the needs of IDPs and refugees, covering protection, re-settlement support, resolution of land disputes, and longer-term assistance. It should take account of the potential for significant future movements in light of increasing insecurity.

Strengthen the UN's humanitarian response capabilities

The UN's capacity for humanitarian response, coordination, and the protection of civilians must be strengthened significantly, with expanded human and material resources at both central and regional levels.

10 Community Peace-building

Almost all of the peace-building work in Afghanistan has been at a political level, where there are links to warlordism, corruption or criminality, or it is target-limited, such as the disarmament programmes. Initiatives such as the Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice are significant, but lack clarity and are primarily concerned with peace and reconciliation at a national level. Implementation of the Plan has been non-existent or extremely limited.⁶⁷ Moreover, most peace-building measures only marginally, indirectly or partially concern the *people* of Afghanistan. The capacity of Afghan communities to resolve their own disputes, and build and sustain peace, has largely been neglected.

The recent deterioration in security, particularly in the south and south-east of Afghanistan, is evidence that top-down approaches are by themselves inadequate, without parallel nationwide, peace-work at ground level.

War has fractured and strained the social fabric of the country and has deepened widespread poverty, which is itself a cause of insecurity. An Oxfam Security Survey of 500 people in six provinces shows that disputes at a local level often have root causes in poverty, and are largely related to resources, particularly land and water, family matters or inter-community and tribal differences.

Local disputes frequently lead to violence and insecurity, which not only destroys quality of life and impedes development work, but is also exploited by commanders or warlords to strengthen their positions in the wider conflict. Security threats, are diverse – not only the Taliban as is sometimes portrayed – and in many cases they have local roots or connections. In rural areas, predominantly local mechanisms are used to resolve disputes, especially community or tribal councils of elders (known as *jirgas* or *shuras*), and district governors.

Recommendations

Promote community peace-building

There is a clear need for widespread community peace-building. This is a participatory, bottom-up approach, which strengthens community capacities to resolve disputes and conflict; to develop trust and social cohesion within and between communities; and to promote inter-ethnic and inter-group dialogue. It focuses on capacity building in mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution techniques and supports civil society and schools' involvement in local peace and development. Existing community peace-building programmes, implemented by Afghan and international NGOs, including Oxfam, have been highly effective. An independent analysis of the work of one peace-building NGO in western Afghanistan concluded that the programmes had a major positive impact on local security and that it was 'a creative initiative at the forefront of enabling and supporting what is truly wanted by Afghan partners and communities.'⁶⁸ Thus, donors should significantly expand support for NGOs and civil society actors carrying out such work.

Develop a national strategy for community peace-building

Given that existing work on community peace-building in Afghanistan has such a major impact on peace and development, yet remains fragmented and benefits only a tiny proportion of Afghans, there is powerful case for the development of a national strategy. In Kenya for example, where Oxfam has undertaken community peace-building for over a decade, there is now a national steering committee and peace-network to ensure high quality coordinated, national coverage. In Afghanistan, with dialogue, coordination and external assistance, a civil-society led strategy should be developed, with a series of local strategies relevant to provincial circumstances. It should include phased capacity building, peace-education, awareness-raising, mainstreaming, research and monitoring; it should also ensure that women are fully included in peace-building activities. The Afghan government and donors should give full support to the development and implementation of such a strategy.

11 Regional Action

As a landlocked state sharing largely porous borders with Pakistan (2,400km), Iran (930km), Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China, Afghanistan is necessarily affected by the policies of its neighbours, particularly in respect of refugees movements, migration, security, narcotics and trade.

Over 2 million Afghan refugees are officially living in Pakistan, and 0.9 million in Iran.⁶⁹ In 2007 some 350,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan and 170,000, mainly economic migrants, were forcibly deported from Iran. As acknowledged in the joint Afghanistan Pakistan peace *jirga* held in August last year, the Taliban and other illegal armed groups operate with the support of groups based in Afghanistan's neighbouring states. There is extensive trafficking of opium and heroin across Afghanistan's northern and southern borders, including several thousand tonnes of precursor chemicals, required for refining opium, across the southern border every year.⁷⁰

Afghanistan's neighbours will be critical to the country's economic development. A significant proportion of Afghanistan's trade is both with and through neighbouring states; Pakistan, for example, accounts for 25% of imports and 20% of exports and is an important transshipment route.⁷¹ Afghanistan's trade with Iran has increased considerably.

Recommendations

Refugees and migrants

Both Pakistan and Iran should act in accordance with principles enshrined in the Tripartite Agreements made with each country, Afghanistan and UNHCR; in particular, that repatriation is voluntary and gradual. Given the security situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan should be assisted by the international community to continue to host Afghan refugees, 80% of whom do not wish to return. Their legal status and long-term social and economic integration into Pakistani society must be fully considered. Iran should ensure the measured and proportionate treatment of economic migrants. Donors should ensure that shortfalls in UNHCR's budgets are met so that it can provide comprehensive reintegration assistance to returnees.

Security

Pakistan and Iran should take measures to ensure that no groups or members of its administrations or armed forces provide weapons, supplies or any other support to illegal armed groups in Afghanistan. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan should be scrutinised for their willingness to implement undertakings given in the joint peace *jirga* held in August. Military action by a foreign power against Iran, or against groups in the Afghan border areas of Pakistan, could be seriously destabilising for Afghanistan and lead to an intensification of attacks on international and Afghan forces.

Narcotics

Neighbour states should assist in counter-narcotics by taking measures to prevent the export of opium from Afghanistan, and the transit to Afghanistan of chemicals

required for refining. In both cases Afghanistan and neighbouring states should reinforce efforts to share intelligence, strengthen interdiction and improve law enforcement. The trilateral agreement on counter-narcotics between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, signed in June 2007, should be implemented in full and should be succeeded by more detailed agreements which enhance cross-border cooperation.

Trade

It is in the long-term interests of regional partners to support Afghanistan by accepting preferential trade agreements, which incorporate low tariffs for Afghan exports and unrestricted transit trade, but allow Afghanistan to protect its nascent productive sectors. As Oxfam argues in a recent briefing paper, Afghanistan should not be pressured to achieve rapid accession to the World Trade Organisation, which would have few benefits and could undermine efforts to reduce poverty.⁷² Members of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which Afghanistan joined in April 2007, should develop a coordinated action plan with practical measures in development assistance, trade and investment, to promote Afghanistan's economy. This should be supplemented by expanding and strengthening regional initiatives on trade, transport and energy supply by members of the Economic Cooperation Organisation and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program.⁷³

Endnotes

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